

Take a Step Back

LUKE 6:6–13

2



GOAL

Youth explore the importance of self-care as modeled by Jesus. Youth are encouraged to find their own avenues of inner peace.

- A Art
- AM Active/Movement
- AT Abstract Thinking
- C Conversation
- CT Concrete Thinking
- D Drama
- G Game
- M Music
- QC Quiet/Contemplative
- S Service
- T Technology
- X Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

Dear God, calm me.
Connect my spirit with
yours and allow me to share
your compassion. Amen.

THIS SESSION

God calls us to do so many things including caring for others and working for justice, but God also calls us to find our own inner peace. This session is about finding a balance between actively working for peace and taking a step back. “Take a Step Back” may mean finding calming activities to center oneself or it may involve discovering more active ways to reset our minds and hearts. The means of finding inner peace is not as important as the commitment and discipline to do so.

THE BIBLE STORY

In Luke 6:6–13, Jesus is tested to see whether he will heal on the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day intended for rest, and yet Jesus upsets the Pharisees by working on the Sabbath. Jesus feels empowered to heal before retreating for some time of prayer and reflection with his disciples. The story shows how Jesus achieves a balance between his ministry and rest.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Some youth regularly push themselves to their limits in school work and activities. Others are good at taking care of themselves. Most are not good at both. In the Bible story for this session, Jesus does both. Some youth receive pressure from home and from school to be better athletes, musicians, students, and so forth. Some embrace this fast-paced lifestyle because it gives them purpose and an identity they are searching for. Other youth will connect with Jesus in the second part of this story where he retreats for a time of rest and connection. These youth value relationships over achievements and enjoy more self-reflection. Both kinds of youth are wonderful in their own ways; however, this session may challenge the achievers and affirm those who enjoy self-reflection.

SESSION PREPARATION

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Graffiti Sheets” (p. 14): Prepare and post newsprint.
- “Peace Music” (p. 15): Do an internet search for “Depeche Mode Peace lyrics” and make copies for participants.
- “Reviewing the Infographic” (p. 15): Do a little research on one of the people or movements on the *Make Peace* infographic poster (bit.ly/FMInfographicPosters, Year 2 Set) and be prepared to tell about it.
- “Shalom” (p. 16): Cut out rectangular pieces of paper that will represent bricks.
- “Journaling Peace” (p. 17): Provide journals for youth to use in sessions 2 and 3.



GETTING STARTED

Choose one option.

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- ☐ Music player with calm music (optional)

QUESTIONS

C

Provide a calm atmosphere as youth arrive; perhaps dim the lights and play calming music. You might have pillows and blankets on the floor where they can sit or create a quiet reflection space. Invite them to enter the room calmly and find a comfortable spot to reflect on the following questions:

- ➔ Where have you found peace this week?
- ➔ When do you feel most at peace?

Tell the group that, today, we will talk about finding inner peace.

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- ☐ Newsprint
 - ☐ Markers

GRAFFITI SHEETS

QC C

Prepare and post three pieces of newsprint on the wall with one of the following questions on each sheet:

- ➔ Where did you find peace this week?
- ➔ What makes finding peace easy?
- ➔ What makes finding peace hard?

Welcome youth as they arrive and give them a marker. Invite them to walk around the room and write short answers to any of the questions on the graffiti sheets that they feel comfortable answering. After all have arrived, point out some of the interesting answers on each sheet or the answers that show up most frequently on each sheet. These graffiti sheets may be left up and referenced throughout the session or through the rest of the unit.

Tell the group that, today, we will talk about finding inner peace.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

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- ☐ Masking tape

CHOOSING YOUR PLACE

A CT

Divide the room into three sections by placing two strips of tape on the floor. There will be a left, center, and right section. Tell youth to stand in the center section and inform them you are going to read some questions. If the youth strongly agree with the statement, they should move to the left section (your right). If they strongly disagree, they should move to the right section (your left). If the youth feel neutral or unsure about the statement, they can choose to remain in the middle. Encourage youth not to overthink their answers. There are no right or wrong ways to respond to these statements.

Statements:

- I'm great at relaxing.
- I often feel nervous or anxious.
- I worry all the time.
- I am easily annoyed.
- I think something awful will happen any minute.
- I often feel afraid.
- I often have trouble eating or sleeping.

After reading these statements, ask youth to sit together, and ask the following discussion questions:

- Did anything surprise you about this activity?
- Is it possible to be worry-free?
- Is it possible to live without some anxiety?
- Is it OK to feel worried, anxious, or afraid?
- What is your relationship with God like when you're worried or anxious?
- How can God help when you're feeling worried or anxious?

PEACE MUSIC



Distribute copies of the lyrics to the song and then show the YouTube video “Depeche Mode – Peace” (bit.ly/FMDepeche, 4:07). Have a discussion using the following questions:

- Why do you think the singer is looking for peace?
- What makes the singer so sure peace will come?
- Why does the singer say, “I am walking love incarnate”?
- What does it mean to “leave anger in the past”?
- How can someone be “a living act of holiness”?
- Is the peace the singer seeks easy or hard? Why?

- ☐ Internet-connected device
- ☐ Copies of Depeche Mode “Peace” lyrics



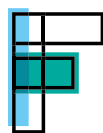
Watch the video and read the lyrics before showing it and determine if it is appropriate for your group.

End the conversation by informing participants that, today, we are discussing peace as it pertains to us individually. We will find ways to create and maintain peace within ourselves.

REVIEWING THE INFOGRAPHIC



Display the *Make Peace* infographic poster and tell about one of the people or movements you learned about.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

- ☐ *Make Peace* infographic poster



A *Sabbath* is a holy day of rest. In Jesus' time, it was commonly understood among Jews that one should not do any work on this day.

MAD-LIBS



Form small groups and designate the oldest person in the group as the leader or assign an adult volunteer as leader of each group. Give the leader a copy of Resource Page 1 and a pen. Without letting others in the group see what is written on the page, instruct the leader to ask the other participants in the group to help fill in the blanks. The leader will simply say what is needed (“noun,” “verb,” “holiday,” and so on.) and write down the answer that the group agrees on in the blank. Once all blanks are filled, the leader will then read the story to the group. When the groups are finished, have the groups share their stories. Once everyone has read their stories, read Luke 6:6–13 to the group. Ask participants these questions:

- Why do you think Jesus went to the mountain?
- How did Jesus find inner peace while on the mountain?
- Why was it important for Jesus to have inner peace?
- When do you need to find inner peace?
- How do you find inner peace?

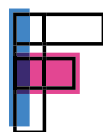
- ☐ Copies of Resource Page 1 (one per group)
- ☐ Pens

ACTING IT OUT

AM D

Assign the following roles to the youth in the room, ensuring that everyone has a part: Jesus, scribes, Pharisees (one or more), man with withered hand, disciples (one or more).

Tell the youth they will be acting out their parts in the story. This will be like improvisation. As you read the story, the characters are to come up with the best actions that match the story. Read Luke 6:6–13, pausing after each sentence to allow the youth assigned these roles to perform the actions found in the passage. Afterward, ask them some or all of the questions from the previous activity, “Mad-Libs.”



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or both options.

- ☐ Internet-connected device
- ☐ Rectangular-cut pieces of paper
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Clear adhesive tape

SHALOM

T CT X

Show the YouTube video “Shalom-Peace” (bit.ly/FMShalomMeaning, 3:48). After showing the video, give four or five pieces of rectangular paper and a marker to each participant. On each brick, have the youth write something they need or they do to feel complete (*quiet, rest, call a friend, go to church*). Work together to tape their bricks together, creating a complete brick wall with all of the participants’ bricks. When the wall is complete, ask the following questions:

- ➔ What feels missing for your own shalom?
- ➔ Why is shalom important as it is understood in the Bible?
- ➔ What is the relationship between shalom and peace?
- ➔ Do you see something on this wall that you can do throughout this week to feel more complete or more whole?

- ☐ Art supplies
- ☐ Paper



In addition, consider reading *The Peace Book* by Todd Parr as an introduction to this activity.

WRITING A BOOK

A AT X

Remind youth that today we are considering the importance of inner peace as part of what it takes to be a peacemaker. Tell the group about the children’s book, *The Peace Book*,¹ that makes very simple statements about what peace is: “Peace is keeping the water blue for all the fish, Peace is helping your neighbor, Peace is planting a garden, Peace is saying you’re sorry when you hurt someone.”

Have youth think about one statement for themselves that begins with “Peace is . . .” Invite them to get a piece of paper and art supplies and write their statement on the paper and illustrate it however they like. Once complete, allow youth to share their creations with one another. These art pieces may be compiled to create the youth’s own “peace book” that is kept in the youth space or shared with the whole church.

1. Todd Parr, *The Peace Book* (New York: LB Kids, 2017).



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

ECCESIASTES MEDITATION



☐ Bible

Invite youth to listen as you read Ecclesiastes 3:1–8. Tell the youth you are going to read it again. When they hear a phrase that describes something they have experienced before, invite them to raise their hand. For example, everyone should raise their hands when they hear you read “a time to be born.” Carry out the reading.

As a group, ponder why this Scripture was written. What might the author have been experiencing that made them want to write this poetry? Affirm all answers, but direct the conversation toward helping the youth recognize that, at times, we can experience multiple conflicting emotions and situations. Ask youth to think about when they have encountered several conflicting emotions in their own lives. They do not have to share these situations unless they choose to do so.

Then tell the youth we are going to contemplate the following scenarios. Read each of these sentences twice, giving youth 15–20 seconds in between to think and pray silently.

1. Think about a time when you had a lot of emotions. Name some of those emotions to yourself.
2. Tell yourself that it is OK to feel a lot of emotions, even if they do not seem to make sense.
3. Take three long, slow, deep breaths.
4. Tell yourself that it's OK to be angry, sad, uncertain, or nervous at times.
5. Take three long, slow, deep breaths.
6. Imagine that Jesus is with you.
7. Imagine Jesus encouraging you to give all of your conflict, your uncertainty, your sadness, and your anxiety to him.
8. Take three long, slow, deep breaths.
9. Imagine Jesus by your side telling you he wants to be present in your life, even when it feels messy and uncertain.
10. Imagine feeling the relief of some of these burdens.
11. Take three long, slow, deep breaths.
12. Imagine telling Jesus thank you for holding these feelings for you.
13. Quietly say “Amen” to yourself.

JOURNALING PEACE



- ☐ Paper and pens
☐ Contemplative music (optional)

Share with participants that many people find that journaling helps them achieve inner peace. Journaling can help us organize our thoughts, but writing our feelings down can also give us a way for stress to leave our bodies. Give participants ten minutes to journal about anything they would like to journal about. Remind the youth they will not have to show anyone these journal entries. If they have trouble getting started, suggest several things they could write about, such as:

- Write about what you are most worried about or most happy about right now.
- Tell God what you are feeling and any concerns you have.
- Write about something fun you did lately.

After ten minutes, ask youth what it felt like to journal. Encourage youth to continue this practice throughout the week.



For youth who have trouble sitting still to write, use an internet-connected device to create a countdown timer that is visible for all participants to see while journaling.

INNER PEACE ROTATION



Create several stations around the room for youth to practice finding inner peace. These may include yoga with a short yoga video, finger labyrinths, watercolors, and prayer books. Allow youth to move through these stations as they feel comfortable doing so, without feeling obligated to try each station.



FOLLOWING JESUS

PRAYER



Invite participants to stand close in a circle and hear this adaptation of Psalm 4.

Let us pray:

Answer us when we call, O God.

Give us room when we are in distress.

Be gracious and hear our prayer.

Do not let us suffer shame,

for we are being faithful to you, O God.

When we are disturbed, bring us peace.

Let us offer our lives for you

and trust in your goodness.

Put joy in our hearts

even if other people do not understand that joy.

When we lie down to sleep, let us sleep,

for you alone, O God, give us peace. Amen.

Without reading the entire story, ask the group to name something that fits the category of the word you call out. Call out each word under the blank spaces (*holiday, place, “ed” verb*) and just write in the group’s response. When you have filled in all the blank spaces, go back and read the story aloud to the group, using the words the group gave you.

On another _____, Jesus entered the _____ and
(holiday) (place)

_____. There was a man there whose hand was
(“ed” verb)

_____. The scribes and the Pharisees watched Jesus to see if he would
(adjective)

_____ on the _____. If he did, they would _____
(verb) (holiday) (verb)

against him. Even though Jesus knew what they were thinking, he said to the man with the ailment, “Come and _____ here.” So, the man got up and _____.
(verb) (“ed” verb)

Then Jesus said to them, “I ask you, is it _____ to do good or harm this day?”
(adjective)

Jesus then asked the man to stretch out his hand. He did so, and Jesus _____ it.
(“ed” verb)

The scribes and Pharisees were filled with _____, and they decided they
(plural nouns)

would _____ Jesus.
(verb)

Jesus, however, went to a _____ where he _____. He
(place) (“ed” verb)

spent the night _____ and talked to God. When day came, he called his
(“ing” verb)

disciples, the _____. He _____ and _____ with
(plural nouns) (“ed” verb) (“ed” verb)

his disciples, and he felt _____.
(adjective)

